



Integrity

On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln traveled to a battlefield cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and urged his countrymen to dedicate themselves to the preservation of "government of the people, by the people and for the people." It is to this same cause that we dedicate ourselves.

Throughout the history of our democracy, there has been an ongoing struggle to put the people's interest ahead of the special interests. Since the Republican Party took complete control of the White House, the House of Representatives, and the U.S. Senate, cronyism and corruption have become widespread in the people's government.

This culture of corruption is an affront to the idea of a representative democracy, and its consequences are devastating: a complex and costly prescription drug bill written by the pharmaceutical industry, an energy policy written by the oil industry, and record deficits to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy few.

Democrats declare that it is time to end the culture of corruption prevailing through all levels of government. We are committed to immediate change to lead this country in a new direction, to put an end to business as usual, and to make certain this nation's leaders serve the people's

interests, not special interests. Our responsibility to our constituents and to our nation is to represent all of the people, not just the powerful.

Our goal is to restore accountability, honesty and openness at all levels of government. To do so, we will create and enforce rules that demand the highest ethics from every public servant, sever unethical ties between lawmakers and lobbyists, and establish clear standards that prevent the trading of official business for gifts.

Honest leadership is not a partisan goal. It is the key to a stronger union. We must all work together to put the progress of all Americans ahead of the special interests of the few. With honest leadership and open government, America's leaders can once again focus on the urgent needs of the American people: real security overseas and at home, economic strength and educational excellence, affordable health care, energy independence, and retirement security.

BAN LOBBYIST GIFTS AND TRAVEL

Prohibit the receipt of gifts, including gifts of meals, entertainment and travel, from lobbyists. Prohibit travel on corporate jets.

CLOSE THE REVOLVING DOOR

Close the revolving door between the Congress and lobbying firms by doubling (from one year to two) the cooling-off period during which lawmakers, senior Congressional staff, and Executive Branch officials are prohibited from lobbying their former offices. Eliminate floor privileges for former Members of Congress and officers of the Senate and House who return to lobby.

TOUGHEN PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF LOBBYIST ACTIVITY

Expand the information lobbyists must disclose - including campaign contributions and client fees. Require them to file disclosure reports electronically and increase the frequency of those filings. Require lobbyists to certify that they did not violate the rules and make them subject to criminal penalties for false certifications.

SHUT DOWN PAY-TO-PLAY SCHEMES LIKE THE "K STREET PROJECT"

End efforts like the "K Street Project," created by Republicans to pressure corporations and lobbying firms on whom to hire in exchange for political favors.

DISCLOSURE OF OUTSIDE JOB NEGOTIATIONS

Require lawmakers to disclose when they are negotiating private sector jobs and require Executive Branch officials who are negotiating private sector jobs to receive approval from the independent Office of Government Ethics.

PROHIBIT "DEAD OF NIGHT" SPECIAL INTEREST PROVISIONS

Require that all conference committee meetings be open to the public and that members of the conference committee have a public opportunity to vote on all amendments. Make copies of conference reports available to Members and post them publicly on the Internet 24 hours before consideration (unless waived by a supermajority vote). Disclose all earmarks.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR CONTRACT CHEATERS

Restore accountability and openness in federal contracting by subjecting major contract actions to public disclosure and aggressive competition; criminally prosecute contractors who cheat taxpayers, with penalties including suspension and debarment; impose stiff criminal and civil penalties for wartime fraud on government contracting; prohibit contractors with conflicts of interest from conducting oversight or writing contract requirements they could bid on; mandate full disclosure of contract overcharges; create tough penalties for improper no-bid contracts; and close the revolving door between federal contract officials and private contractors.

PROHIBIT CRONYISM IN KEY APPOINTMENTS

End rampant cronyism by requiring that any individual appointed to a position involving public safety possess proven credentials and expertise in areas relevant to the position.



Civility

"All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle: that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression."

- Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1801

Every person in America has a right to have his or her voice heard. No Member of Congress should be silenced on the floor, as has been the practice of Republican leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives. Respectful of both the wishes of the Founders, and the expectations of the American people, we offer the following principles for restoring democracy in the "People's House," guaranteeing that the voices of all the people are heard.

BIPARTISAN ADMINISTRATION OF THE HOUSE

There should be regular consultations among the elected leaders of both parties to discuss scheduling, administration and operations of the House.

The House should have a predictable, professional, family-friendly schedule that allows the legislative process to proceed in a manner that ensures timely and deliberate dispensation of the work of the Congress.

Regular meetings between Chairs and Ranking Members of committees and staffs should be held.

The Minority should control at least one-third of committee budgets and office space.

REGULAR ORDER FOR LEGISLATION

Bills should be developed following full hearings and open subcommittee and committee markups, with appropriate referrals to other committees. Members should have at least 24 hours to examine a bill prior to consideration at the subcommittee level.

Bills should generally come to the floor under a procedure that allows open, full, and fair debate consisting of a full amendment process that grants the Minority the right to offer its alternatives, including a substitute.

Members should have at least 24 hours to examine bill and conference report text prior to floor consideration. Rules governing floor debate must be reported before 10 p.m. for a bill to be considered the following day.

Floor votes should be completed within 15 minutes, with the customary 2-minute extension to accommodate Members' ability to reach the House Chamber to cast their votes. No vote shall be held open in order to manipulate the outcome.

House-Senate conference committees should hold regular meetings (at least weekly) of all conference committee Members. All duly-appointed conferees should be informed of the schedule of conference committee activities in a timely manner and given ample opportunity for input and debate as decisions are made toward final bill language.

The Suspension Calendar should be restricted to non-controversial legislation, with minority-authored legislation scheduled in relation to the party ratio in the House.